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Groups of countries in special situations: Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Letter dated 8 October 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the Ministerial Declaration adopted by the Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the least developed countries during the general debate of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly on 29 September 2009 (see annex).

I would like to request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 56 (a).

(*Signed*) Madhu Raman **Acharya**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 8 October 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Ministerial Declaration of the Least Developed Countries New York, 29 September 2009

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation of the least developed countries, having met in New York on 29 September 2009, during the general debate of the sixty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly, held from 23 September to 1 October 2009,

Recalling the Brussels Declaration and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 and the outcome of the High-level Meeting on the Midterm comprehensive global review of the implementation of the Programme of Action,

Reaffirming the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the 2009 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council on the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health",

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 2009/31 of 31 July 2009 on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010,

Recalling also the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development, held from 24 to 26 June 2009, where it was recognized that the economic and social progress achieved by developing countries in recent years is being threatened by the global economic crisis and that therefore support for them needs to be increased,

Taking note of the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development of 2008, in which support for the least developed countries with respect to their integration into the global trade system and financing for development was reiterated,

Taking note also of the annual progress report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 63/227 to convene the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries at a high level in 2011 to undertake a comprehensive appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action and adopt a renewed partnership between the least developed countries and their development partners,

Adopt the following Declaration:

1. We note the progress made by the least developed countries towards implementing the goals of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, as evidenced by their improved growth performance and social progress and by the graduation of several countries from the list of least developed countries;

2. We remain concerned, however, about the uneven and insufficient progress achieved in the implementation of the Programme of Action at a time when

the international community has commenced the preparations for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, which will undertake a comprehensive appraisal of its implementation, and stress the urgent need to address areas of weakness in its implementation and the continued precarious socio-economic situation in many least developed countries through a strong commitment to the objectives, goals and targets of the Programme of Action;

3. We also express our concern regarding the severe disproportionate impact of the global economic and financial crisis on the least developed countries and recognize that the social and economic progress achieved in recent years, particularly on the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, is now threatened in developing countries, in particular in the least developed countries;

4. We express further concern that the number of people living in extreme poverty, which was already a matter of concern, is growing at an alarmingly rapid rate in the wake of the global economic crisis, placing an increasing number of people at risk of malnutrition, in particular children and women, and recognize that there are important linkages among the issues of development, poverty eradication and gender equality;

5. We recognize that the global food crisis still continues to affect the livelihoods and overall economic situation of people in the least developed countries, resulting in extreme poverty and hunger. We underscore the need for urgent and concerted efforts to ensure immediate relief measures to supply food to those in need and for long-term sustainable measures to ensure food security and agricultural development in the least developed countries;

6. We take note of measures taken by the least developed countries to mitigate the impact of the global financial and economic crisis on their economies, and recognize that the least developed countries lack the capacity to do so;

7. In this regard, we acknowledge global efforts to stabilize the world economy, including measures taken by the United Nations system and other stakeholders, as well as efforts by individual developed and developing countries;

8. We take note of the Global Plan for Recovery and Reform adopted by the Group of Twenty (G-20) at its summit held in London on 2 April 2009, and recognize its commitment to make available an additional $1.1 trillion programme aimed at revitalizing the world economy. A major portion of these funds will be available for use by emerging markets and developing countries, while a limited share ($50 billion) of these resources will be targeted specifically to low-income countries. We call upon the G-20 to further consider addressing the financial needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed countries. We also call upon all G-20 countries to follow through on their commitments and to monitor their implementation. While recognizing the decisions taken by the G-20, we are resolved to strengthen the role of the United Nations and its Member States in economic and financial affairs, including its coordinating role;

9. We remain concerned that the resources earmarked for the least developed countries by the international community are small in relation to the magnitude of the impact of the global financial and economic crisis, and to the financing needs of the least developed countries to cope with this adverse external shock;

10. In this regard, we urge the international community, development partners and multilateral development institutions to scale up support to the least developed countries through increased financial and technical support to enable them to cope with multiple external shocks and to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable segments of their populations;

11. We recognize the importance of remittances to the least developed countries and call upon the international community to provide additional support to countries experiencing serious negative effects as a result of the impact of the financial crisis on migrant remittances. In this regard, we welcome the initiative of the Government of Benin to create a pilot programme to establish an international migrant remittances observatory in accordance with the declaration of the Ministerial Conference of Least Developed Countries on Enhancing the Development Impact of Remittances, held in Cotonou on 9 and 10 February 2006, and direct the Coordination Bureau and the Ambassadors in New York to conclude, as soon as possible, the negotiations of the proposed memorandum of understanding discussed in the Working Group on Remittances, in consultation with the least developed countries;

12. We also urge the United Nations system organizations, the Bretton Woods institutions, bilateral and multilateral donors and other development partners, in view of the global crisis, to increase their assistance to the least developed countries in translating the goals and targets of the Programme of Action into concrete actions that are consistent with their national development priorities; and, as appropriate, to collaborate with and support the relevant national development forums and follow-up mechanisms, especially in the context of preparations for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries;

13. We reiterate the invitation to all development and trading partners to support the implementation of the transition strategy for countries graduating from the list of least developed countries, to avoid any abrupt reductions in either official development assistance or technical assistance provided to graduated countries, and to consider extending to graduated countries, or gradually reducing, the trade preferences previously made available to them as least developed countries, and urge them to defer the time frame already set out for countries to graduate in accordance with the 2015 target for achieving the Millennium Development Goals;

14. We recognize the specific geographical constraints and problems faced by the landlocked least developed countries, which continue to suffer from the effects of high transport costs, which are associated with poor transit facilities and policies and additional border crossings. In this regard, we call on the international community to focus greater attention on efforts to help these countries address their special development needs, in accordance with the objectives of the Brussels Programme of Action;

15. We reaffirm the special needs and challenges confronting countries emerging from conflict. In this regard, we urge the international community and the United Nations system to address these needs and challenges and take urgent and concrete action in the areas of financial assistance, technical support and infrastructure development to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and help these countries achieve a smooth transition from relief to development;

16. We underscore that development must remain at the heart of the Doha Round of trade negotiations, and we urge the international community to take on board the interests and difficulties of the least developed countries, the most vulnerable group in the United Nations community, in order to effectively integrate them into the multilateral trading system;

17. In this regard, we call for an early, ambitious, successful and balanced conclusion to the Doha Round that increases market access, generates increased trade flows, focuses on the needs of the least developed countries and emphasizes the importance of commitments to implement duty-free and quota-free market access for the least developed countries, as agreed in the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration of the World Trade Organization; to make the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries operationally effective; to ensure the parallel elimination of all forms of export subsidies and disciplines on all export measures with equivalent effect; to substantially reduce trade-distorting domestic support in accordance with the mandate of the Doha Round and the Hong Kong Ministerial Declaration; and to meet existing aid-for-trade pledges;

18. We urge developed countries that have not already done so, and developing countries in a position to do so, to provide immediate, predictable, duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all products originating from all least developed countries, combined with simplified and transparent rules of origin to facilitate exports from the least developed countries;

19. We urge the international community to help the least developed countries diversify their economic base by developing their productive capacities to fully benefit from globalization and global integration, as part of efforts to ensure that opportunities created by globalization benefit poor populations in the least developed countries and to manage risks of insecurity and exclusion;

20. We call upon development partners to respond to the trade capacity needs of the least developed countries by significantly increasing their contributions to the trust fund of the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance to Least Developed Countries;

21. We underscore the urgent need to operationalize the Aid-for-Trade Initiative with sufficient additional, non-conditional and predictable funding, which primarily should support the efforts of the least developed countries to address their supply constraints, diversify their economies, promote value addition and improve their infrastructural, human and institutional capacities;

22. We recognize that the impacts of climate change severely hamper the lives and livelihoods of millions of poor populations in the least developed countries, especially in small islands and low-lying coastal States. We welcome the adoption of the Bali Plan of Action for long-term cooperative action to address mitigation, adaptation, financing and technology transfers;

23. We express our deep concern at the lack of progress in the current climate change negotiations and urge developed countries to commit to deeper reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. We also call on developed countries to increase financial and technological support for adaptation to climate change and to facilitate technology transfer for the sustainable development of the least developed countries. In this regard, we welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to hold the Summit on Climate Change on 22 September 2009 in New York, and hope that it

will galvanize the political will of all countries to successfully conclude the climate change negotiations in Copenhagen this December, taking into account all the concerns of the least developed countries;

24. We reaffirm the decision of the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution 63/227 of 19 December 2008, to convene the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 2011 at the highest political level;

25. We emphasize that the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries should strengthen concerted global action in support of the least developed countries;

26. We take note of the progress made in preparations for the Conference at the national, regional and global levels and commend the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, the United Nations Development Programme, the regional commissions and other United Nations agencies and organizations for their efforts;

27. We welcome with appreciation the offer of the Government of Turkey to host the Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, to be held in 2011;

28. We urge the regional commissions, in particular the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, to step up efforts to prepare regional reviews and, in collaboration with the United Nations resident coordinators and the Office of the High Representative, to provide support to the least developed countries in the preparation of country reviews.